



OLARIA is an undiscovered country, and there has never been anything written about it in the newspapers.

Polaria was once a perfectly white country. Even in the summer there were no green leaves and bright flowers; they were all white. The forests were all white like the frost-folios on the window panes in the winter. The pastures were white also and white cattle with horns like ivory and sheep with fleeces like silver fed in them.

All the people in Polaria, young and old, had white hair, and white faces like statues and they always dressed in white.

Polaria has for a long period been a very prosperous country. But at one time there were two very serious causes for unhappiness in Polaria. One was a strange disease, peculiar to the country, which the doctors called by a learned name, which meant "hunger for color." People who were attacked by it never recovered, but went about with their eyes shut, trying to keep their eyes shut they could imagine colors, and the doctors ordered that treatment. Fully one-third of the population that the cause of the trouble was their eyes shut, and that was a great evil, since it hindered progress, as well as looking awkward and stupid.

The other affliction of Polaria was also of the nature of a disease, although it was a moral one. It might have been called "a groovy national discontent," and it affected only the rising generation. All children were attacked by it, and the doctors could not cure them, and finally a national council was held to see if nothing more could be done.

The council was in session for a week. The king of Polaria announced it as his opinion that the cause of the trouble was the great prosperity of the country, and the absence of taxes. Everything was so cheap that the children had all they wanted, and consequently were not satisfied with anything.

Everybody voted "yes" to this, and there were no contrary minds, but though they agreed the cause, it was not so easy to settle upon any remedy for the evil.

The council was in session twelve hours a day, and the members all brought their dinners in tin pails, and did not go home at noon, but they got no nearer a solution.

Yet it was very important that something should be done speedily as Christmas was approaching, and on that day the epidemic of discontent again grew painfully alarming. When the children were given their presents of the Christmas trees they were so discontented that they pulled each other with their hands. Many little boys had their foreheads plastered with brown paper for weeks, because they had been hit by jumping jacks, and Noah's ark and tops. Little girls, too, dragged the dolls from their stockings on Christmas morning and threw them out of the windows; and as the dolls in Polaria had feelings, that was truly shocking to the community.

The poor dolls who had been invented by a great genius of Polaria and had feelings just as natural as life, lay under the windows, and the children were given them, until the officers of the Humane society came with ambulances and gathered them up. There were dolls in white satin trains and silver crowns, like queens, who could walk and talk, and baby dolls, and beautiful boy dolls, and they all had feelings; but it made no difference. The little girls related them all.

On the Christmas the year before it had been suggested that all the children be summoned into the market place on Christmas day and be obliged to exchange their presents. The plan had been tried but had nearly occasioned a riot. The children had been more discontented than ever when forced to take each other's presents. The air had been thick with toys and dolls had sprawled about on their faces everywhere, weeping because their feelings were hurt. It would not do to try that plan the second time.

At last the Lord High Chamberlain arose. His eyes were shut, for he had the color disease, he proved that they were "a consult the white witch." Every one said "yes," there were no contrary minds, and it was evident there was not much else to be done.

It was agreed that the king and the Lord High Chamberlain should visit the white witch at 12 o'clock the next afternoon.

At 12 o'clock they set out in a white chariot with a white satin hood all feather-stitched around the edge by the queen, and a white fur robe, and a white horse with white reins.

The king drove because he still had his eyes open. His pointed silver crown flashed white light in the sun, and he shook his whip with his ivory handle and white leather lash over the horse's back. He was impatient to reach the White Witch's house, for that day week was Christmas.

The White Witch lived about ten miles away in a white house with five gables. The five gables were trimmed all around with a wide knitted lace, which the White Witch had knitted with some magic spells, so that it looked like ivory network. This wonderful knitted lace of the witch's was in great demand; indeed, the king's palace was trimmed with it. The

However, this left the King and the council and the country in great perplexity.

Everybody felt that the law must be maintained, yet their only hope of deliverance from one at least of the national diseases lay in the White Witch, who was to be burned. It did not seem polite to ask her assistance, when they were going to burn her. The King said decidedly that he felt he had not the face to do it.

Another council was called and it was decided that the King should visit her and see if they could not effect a compromise.

So on the night before the day set for the execution, the King and the Lord High Chamberlain and the six detectives all took lanterns and went to the dungeon of the White Witch.

The twelve white robins flew in their faces, and attacked them with their little beaks, but the witch said her spell over them, and they settled quietly down on her bosom again.

Then the King started the case and tried to effect a compromise. The witch listened attentively, and then declared her willingness to give them all the assistance in her power if they would spare her life and permit her to water not only her own garden with the magic tea which she had brewed in the tea kettle, but also all the gardens in the country.

But that is Black Magic," objected the King.

"It is strictly White Magic," said the witch firmly. "She would not yield a lot of her conditions. She would not consent to refrain from using her tea kettle and have her life spared. She was obstinate, and that, of course, made a deadlock. They began to think a compromise could not be effected, but suddenly the chief of police fell upon his knees before the King.

"What is it?" said the King.

"At the garden your majesty stated that the witch was to water in the list of black magic white magic."

"Yes," said the king impatiently.

"What then?"

"Why, then, your majesty, if it is not in the list of Black Magic, it must be White Magic, of course."

"Of course," cried the king, and he was so overjoyed that he raised the chief of police and embraced him, and gave him a pearl ring.

So the White Witch was released, and it was high time, for the next night was Christmas eve, and the troubles over the Christmas presents would begin.

All that day the White Witch, with her white robins flying around her, visited the shops and all the houses where Christmas presents were collected, and in every one she repeated her spell:

Le, Lan, Limney, Man, Do ye my will, if ye will or will not.

"The Christmas presents block to the storehouse of the White Witch."

Or-Diminy, Woxy, Niciesley Hot!" The last was an awful threat, but only the Christmas presents understood it.

The dolls who had feelings, trembled, and nodded and said, "yes, ma'am."

The jumping jacks hurried so deeply with their rattling joints that they turned somersaults. The drums beat the penny whistles blew and all the animals in the Noah's ark tried to kneel and fell on their noses, then over on their backs and under.

At nightfall the White Witch went home. She fed her white robins with rice, and made herself a dish of white soup. Then she flung the doors of the new storehouse wide open and sat down by the hearth and knitted on her architectural lace, while she waited. She knew well what would happen. She had commanded all the Christmas presents to do her will, and her will was that they should come to her the second that any discontent was expressed with them.

It was very early, as early as the first Christmas tree was lighted up, when the White Witch laid down her architectural lace and listened. There was a strange din out in the road, and it grew louder and louder.

Presently one could distinguish quite plainly, the tread of hundreds of little kid-shod feet, and the tiny lamentations of the dolls with feelings. The pretty little girl dolls and the boy dolls ran ahead padding and sobbing, then the young lady dolls, and then the young men dolls and the bride dolls holding up their satin trains out of the dust and weeping and their crying was quite pitiful to hear.

Then there was the rattling of the wooden joints of hundreds of jumping jacks, and a stampede of rocking horses and Noah's ark animals. The Noah's ark animals stamped after them in company with little express wagons and wheel barrows. The air overhead was thick with books and pictures and bonbons and perfumery bottles and skates and all the Christmas presents that one could think of. The Witch took them all into her

storehouse, and comforted the dolls with feelings and packed the other presents away safely.

The next morning very early, before dawn, the presents began to come again. All through the next year the children had no playthings and story books. They had no old toys for they had despised them and thrown them away. Not a girl in the country had a doll. Moreover, there were none to be bought, for the king, by the witch's advice, had ordered all toy shops closed, and the keepers to retire for two years on pensions.

The witch kept all the Christmas presents safely locked away, and went about the country with her white tea kettle watering all gardens with her magic tea. The whole face of the country became changed. It grew verdant. Blooming Purple grapes ripened on the walls and rose apples and peaches and golden oranges. Gradually also, the people got rosy cheeks and black and golden hair, and went about with their eyes open. Finally the doctors announced that the national epidemic was extinct.

"What is it?" said the King.

"The witch is busy day and night. When the next Christmas drew near the King and the Lord High Chamberlain drove down one afternoon in the white chariot to see that the witch was doing her duty."

"What?" cried the king.

"No Christmas trees? hang no stockings? buy no presents?"

"On Christmas do nothing?" echoed the king.

"What I have set myself to do, I am doing," replied the witch with dignity, and she would say no more.

The King got into the white chariot and drove away with the chamberlain. They resolved to take the witch to their own country, and it did seem as if any country must go to pieces that made no preparations at all for Christmas.

On Christmas eve the White Witch went through the storehouse and stood before all the corners and walls, and said over eight times:

Le, Lan, Limney, Man, Do ye my will, if ye will or will not.

Or-Diminy, Woxy, Niciesley Hot!" Then she opened the door and sat down near them and knitted her architectural lace, while she waited. She knew what would happen.

Very soon there was a stir among the dolls with feelings. Several of them came running to the door.

"We are called," they cried out joyfully, and ran out in the road with a switch of golden locks and a flutter of silken skirts. All the rest of the dolls followed as fast as they could, and the jumping jacks tumbled out the door, and the stamper of various animals began, and the rattle of the little wagons and sleds.

Long before midnight all the Christmas presents were out of the White Witch's storehouse, and safe in their own homes where their old owners welcomed them with love and gratitude.

All the bells in the steeples rang for Christmas, and for joy, because the epidemic of discontent was over. The White Witch shut the storehouse door, and went into her own house. She sat down beside her own hearth and knitted.

partment clerk with a smile, "are some that are addressed to—"

"Addressed to whom?" demanded the postmaster, shortly.

"If you please, sir," said the clerk, advancing a step, "these letters, as you can see, are sent to—"

"Santa Claus, papa?" interrupted Otto. He had peered over the clerk's arm.

"Yes," said the clerk, "all of them."

The postmaster swung his chair sharply around as if he suspected a joke, but encountering a most deferential gaze, he said: "Oh, yes; I see. That is a different thing. Put the package away, please, and will you a decision some time today."

After the clerk departed, father and son eyed the package with much curiosity. With what artless hopes were these money envelopes freighted? Some were clean. Some were dirty. Some were carefully spelled, but most exhibited no acquaintance with the dictionary whatever. Some looked as if they ought to be funneled. One or two were as neat as a needle. But each one was unmistakably addressed to the Christmas saint, each deserved a better answer than that found in the correspondent's morgue at Washington.

The postmaster's son sorted the letters over with much eagerness.

"Do look at this one. What writing! Look at that comical scrawl—and this!"

"What?"

"What?"

"What?"

"What?"

"What?"

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before his open handsome face. A gentle smile, as attractive as it was unexpected, lighted her eyes.

"Then you wrote them," she said softly.

"I didn't write 'em," she said with a toss of her hatless head. "I wrote to Santa Claus. I never wrote nobody before. Mama's awful sick. We haven't any coal nor wood. I'm two days behind on my shirts."

"On your shirts?" echoed Otto, looking both dazed and amazed.

"I make buttonholes in flannel shirts," explained Carry Miggs. "I sew for Suspender Brothers. I'm one of their old hands. You ain't Santa Claus?"

"Yes I am," answered Otto, drawing himself up importantly. "You bet I am. See, isn't that your letter?"

"How would this come to me if I weren't Santa Claus?" the little clerk looked at Otto silently.

"Her childlike faith in the traditional Christmas saint, and the common sense that hardship had knocked into her, battled for supremacy in her confused mind. But here was her letter, and here he had come into Gold Street to find her. What was one of 'Suspender Brothers' oldest hands' to think of the situation?"

The young gentleman stood towering above her, and smiling upon her, as she had dreamed that Santa Claus was headless. He was not used to the sight of a girl with her shoulders with toys sticking out, and no reindeer coat trimmed with white fur, as she had been taught in the shop windows.

"I'll show you to Mama," she said. "She'll know Santa Claus when she sees him." The girl turned and began to hobble along the street.

"I'll go and get father and make him go with me," he decided.

Carry Miggs turned, and seeing him pass, paused too.

"Don't forget to come along of me? I think Mama would be pleased to see you." The Gold Street girl added with her best manner. "She's got a sumphin' grown into her throat. She can't swallow."

"Why don't you get a doctor?" demanded the boy thoughtlessly.

"Then doctors have to have money," replied Carry Miggs coquely. "Father he paid one, but was killed off a ladder last September." She said this in a matter of fact tone that struck Otto as heartless. He was not used to the sufferings of the poor, or to their quiet ways of bearing trouble.

"Mama's in bed," proceeded Carry Miggs calmly. "I make buttonholes. They ain't paid me yet for no last lot. The regular price is a cent apiece. They docked me last time, an' only give me half an cent no use now."

"Don't you?" exclaimed Otto.

"What's that?"

"It's the form; he says the work in poor, an' he'll only pay me half. It was my turn to be docked, an' I expected it. Only it came kinder hard with Mama sick, an' no one to work but me."

Otto looked at the child of misery.

"What?"

"What?"

"What?"

"What?"

"What?"

He dashed in. He found his father in the library. "I've seen them," he began eagerly.

"Did you make the woman swallow?" asked the postmaster with an indulgent smile.

"Then Otto told his story and Mr. Vanderpool listened seriously to the pathetic tale and saw that the sight of suffering had made more of a man of his boy."

"I promised to bring you tomorrow, papa," announced the postoffice Santa Claus with a quick breath. "You will go and you will really help them."

"I am too busy tomorrow," said his father thoughtfully, "and you are going out of town with your mother to spend Christmas with Uncle Fred."

"But your people can't starve on the \$10 you left them. Later we will see."

"But I promised her, papa," insisted Otto. "I can't break my word."

A tender look touched the father's face. His eyes caressed his son as they rested upon him in the dark. Otto did not see their expression. He came nearer to his father's chair, and drew himself to his full height of five feet four, and said sturdily, almost menacingly, "You don't seem to understand, papa, that I promised."

"If you have given your word, I will send a clerk to Carry Miggs tomorrow."

"But, papa, won't you go yourself the day after? You know if you send me away to Uncle Fred's," continued Otto with a sigh, "you will have to be a Santa Claus substitute."

It was the following June. Otto had returned home for his summer vacation. For the first few months of separation he had inserted in his irregular letters to his father requests that his proteges in Gold Street should receive the attention that he himself, Santa Claus would give. But as these suggestions seemed to be systematically ignored, he gradually omitted them; and it was finally omitted that his memory of the Christmas incident.

As chance would have it, he had not been at home since Christmas week. The Easter vacation had been spent with his uncle again, and he and his father had not met since Christmas day.

But now he was at home again. His mother had kissed him, and cried over him, and his father had said: "Well, well, Otto; my dear boy,—and the store had all year out to a delicious lunch, especially provided for Otto, all talking together, and laughing when suddenly Otto's mind leaped over from his own joyous and luxurious lot to that of the long-forgotten misery in Gold Street."

"I'm going to see Carry Miggs, papa, after lunch," was the first thing he said when he sat down to the table.

"I am awfully afraid her mother is dead. Did you go and see her, papa? You never told me."

"I am perfectly willing you should go," said Mr. Vanderpool with a quick glance at his wife which was mysteriously returned. Otto did not catch this by-play. He leaned back luxuriously.

"It's so nice to be home," he said. "School is nice, but this is better."

"I am glad you think so," observed Mrs. Vanderpool with an air of absorption in something else. "You may serve the soup, papa, please, as the maid who had just come in and stood at the door of the butler's pantry, behind Otto's chair."

The maid stepped to Otto's side and put a plate before him. As she did so, he looked around, and then, "It's Carry," he said, jumping up. "Mamma, it's Carry Miggs!" He looked from one

to the other in stupefaction.

As for the little girl, she stared at Otto with bewilderment in every feature. Her lochin quivered, then her color came like the rose of sunset, then she put up her hands to her face and burst into sobs. She had no crutch now, and impulsively she turned, and hurried with an almost imperceptible limp out of the dining room. Even through two closed doors, one could hear her quivering voice:

"Mama! Mama! Our young gentleman is my Santa Claus. On dear! On dear! It means, said Mrs. Vanderpool, wiping away a futile tear. "It means that your father had them both taken to the hospital and Mrs. Miggs is cured and Carry can walk without a crutch. The doctor says she will be stronger as for her mother. Mrs. Miggs comes in to help our laundry, and Carry is learning to be our table girl. She goes to school in the morning and is doing finely. That is our surprise for you, Otto; we have kept it six months, and we were afraid every moment that you would find it out somehow. They didn't know that we belonged to the Santa Claus. That is our surprise for them."

The pantry door opened, and a woman looked diffidently in. Her misadventure nodded to her. Otto beheld the woman whom he had last seen gasping her starving life away upon the straw pallet in the tenement in Gold Street.

"I only wanted to see the young gent, Mom," she said apologetically. "It's a happy day for us when ya got my Carry's letter. God bless ya, Mr. Otto."

Otto's eyes began to blink ominously. "I might have picked out any other letter," he said modestly.

"But ye didn't," reiterated Mrs. Miggs, putting her apron up to her face. "We never suspect our young gentleman here was you."

"How is it, Otto? On the whole is your Christmas satisfactory?" asked Mr. Vanderpool attacking his soup and turning from the scene. "Carry, pass me the toasted crackers."

"You bet," said Otto, gulping something down. "Yes, I'll take one, Carry; will you, mother—Oh-hum—well now,—and then, in postoffice Santa Claus bounded down the creaking stairs, his steps died into the street and he splashed around the corner out of sight."

The first work on geology was written by Hutton in 1785.

